



School Improvement Grants (SIG) - Cohort I Schools
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
September 9, 2013

Seventy-four (74) schools now comprise the State's list of "priority schools." In addition to sixty (60) schools implementing an intervention model under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, North Carolina has an additional fourteen (14) schools identified under the North Carolina Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request (ESEA Flex) submitted and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in May of 2012. The FAQs addressed in this document are specific to the SIG Cohort I schools noted below (item #5).

NC Priority School Types	# of Schools	Interventions Required
1. School Improvement Grants (SIG) Schools	60	Transformation Model or Turnaround Model
2. ESEA Priority Schools	14	Alignment with ESEA Turnaround Principles

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How are priority schools identified in North Carolina and how often is the methodology applied?

Priority schools are identified every three years under ESEA Flex. A school can be identified based on the achievement of the "all students" group in terms of proficiency over a number of years. Additionally, a Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years will be identified. Lastly, all Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program are included.

2. We have different types of priority Schools in our LEA. How do we distinguish one from another?

There are four different types of priority schools in North Carolina. Identified schools in your LEA will fall into one of the four categories noted below:

- SIG Cohort I Schools – originally approved in 2010, these schools completed the final year of the grant in the 2012-13 school year (SY)
- SIG Cohort II Schools – originally approved in 2011, completing the final year of the grant in SY 2013-14

- ESEA Priority Schools - identified under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request approved in 2012
- SIG Cohort III Schools – approved in June, 2013 and implementing year one of SIG in SY 2013-14

3. If a school remains in priority status for 3 years, but is also identified as a reward school for 1 year, could a school possibly be in 2 categories at the same time?

Yes. Schools initially identified as Priority could make substantial progress during the course of the three-year period and could be identified as a Reward school in a subsequent year (as Reward schools are identified annually).

4. Where can I obtain additional information relative to priority schools in North Carolina?

The NC Priority Schools Wiki can be found at <http://ncprioritysigsupport.wikispaces.com/> and includes:

- The North Carolina Priority Schools Reference Guide
- Links to District and School rubrics for the NC Comprehensive Needs Assessments
- Additional information on NC Indistar
- The Priority School Quality Review template for SY 2013-14

5. Who are the SIG Cohort I schools?

The following schools are noted as SIG Cohort I schools in NC:

Anson Challenge Academy*	Brunswick County Academy
Buncombe Community HS	Hallyburton Academy
W. Mecklenburg HS*	Ramsey St. Alternative
Davidson County HS*	Durham Performance Learning*
Warlick School	Oak Hill Elementary
Enfield Middle School*	SE Halifax High*
Hickory Career/Arts	Tar River*
Farmville Central HS	North Pitt HS
South Central HS	Fairmont HS
Lumberton HS	Henderson Indep. High School
Goldsboro HS	John F. Kennedy (WSFCS)*
Petree Elementary	

*Requested a waiver to extend PRC 143 funds for a fourth year.

6. What interventions must SIG Cohort I priority schools implement?

All SIG Schools in North Carolina must continue to implement interventions aligned with one of the four models (Turnaround, Transformation, Restart, or Closure). The majority of

SIG schools in North Carolina are currently implementing one of the two models noted below:

Transformation

- Develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness
- Implement comprehensive instructional reform strategies
- Increase learning time and create community-oriented schools
- Provide operational flexibility

Turnaround

- Replace the principal
- Screen existing staff (measuring the effectiveness) and rehire no more than 50%
- Select new staff
- Provide ongoing job-embedded PD
- Adopt new governance structure
- Use data and promote its continuous use
- Extend learning time

FUNDING

7. What is the period of availability regarding carryover funds for SIG Cohort I priority schools and will additional funds be made available?

SIG Cohort I schools in NC:

- Received all allotments for SIG under Program Report Code (PRC) 143
- Received a new PRC 105 allotment for the 2013-14 SY. This allotment is on a 27-month cycle, meaning that the funds will expire on September 30, 2015
- Will receive an additional allotment under PRC 105 for the 2014-15 SY (pending federal budget requirements)

Note: Several LEAs from SIG Cohort I requested an additional year to expend PRC 143 funds. As a result, PRC 105 funds were not allotted to those districts/schools.

8. Can PRC 105 and/or SIG funds be used for other Title I and/or at-risk schools in our LEA?

All funds (via PRCs 143, 105, or 117) are to support the identified SIG/Priority school and may not be used for additional schools in the LEA.

NORTH CAROLINA INDISTAR

9. Have any changes occurred regarding the NC Indistar tool?

All indicators have now been aligned with the NC Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), in addition to the Title I schoolwide components. NCDPI has worked to develop and refine a three-year turnaround process for identified schools with annual focus areas of:

- Year 1 – School Culture and Change
- Year 2 – Aligning and Adjusting
- Year 3 – Sustainability

For SIG Cohort I schools, Years 1 and 2 (the original 28 Key Indicators) will continue to be the focus during the 2013-14 SY, with schools moving to sustainability indicators in SY 2014-15.

10. What about reports submitted within NC Indistar?

Due dates for the semi-annual report submissions are November 1, 2013 and March 3, 2014. However, LEAs/Schools will no longer need to submit the Priority Schools Metrics report (this data collection is now automated at NCDPI).

MONITORING/PRIORITY SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEWS (PSQRs)

11. How often will our SIG Cohort I school(s) be monitored and what type of feedback can we expect?

Reviews may include an on-site visit during the year and/or NC Indistar feedback. Documentation referenced in the NC Priority School Reference Guide (see item #4 above) should be maintained in the “Document Upload” on the NC Indistar Dashboard.

A shift in the report format will provide direct feedback relative to the 28 Key Indicators. For each of the indicators, the quality reviewer will provide one of the following comments:

- “Progress Noted” – indicating that the school team has adequately documented progress and that the on-site visit has confirmed the information provided in NC Indistar.
- “Revise Indicator” – indicating that the school team should revisit/reassess the indicator within NC Indistar.